

Medieval Technology: Those Who Pray



St. Anthony (b. 251 CE),
father of monasticism

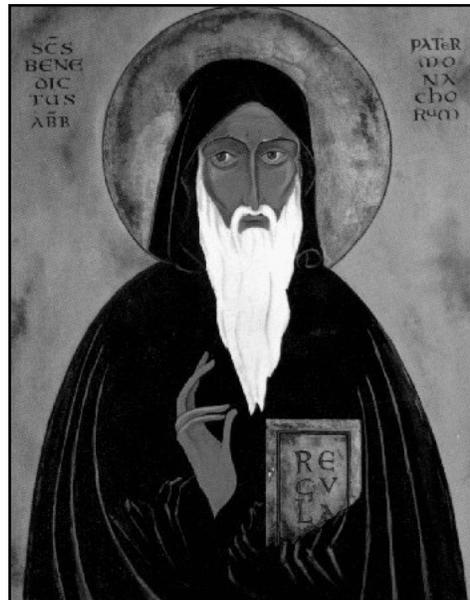
- Monks
 - laymen who wanted to live a Christian life
- they took a vow of poverty, chastity, obedience
- among the most holy in medieval society
- early monks were individuals but they eventually formed into communities
- monasteries governed by an Abbot
- monastery had its own land
 - = wealth

- Early Monks
 - what we might call hermits
- St. Simeon the Stylite
 - lived on top of a pillar for 37 years
- first to organize
 - St. Pachomius (4th century)



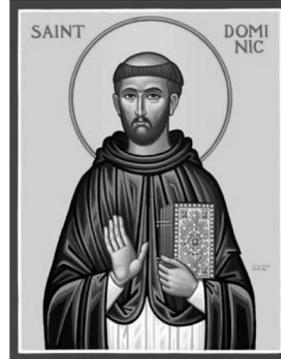
St. Benedict

- most important monk of early Christianity
- St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547)
- wrote “the Rule”
 - *Regula Benedicti*
- order still exists today



Friars

- special kind of monk
- founders: St. Dominic and St. Francis
- Dominicans and Franciscans developed in two different directions
- Dominicans
 - dedicated to battling heresy and to teaching
 - commitment to learning and scholarship



Monasticism and Manual Labor

Rule of St. Benedict

- 73 short chapters
- leading guide to monastic rule in Western Christianity
- two kinds of entries
 - spiritual and administrative
- manual labor = necessary part of monastic life
 - it protects brothers from harmful effects of leisure
 - manual labor connected to the mechanical arts



Monastic Enthusiasm for Technology

- Example:
 - Eilmer of Malmesbury (11th century)
 - Benedictine monk
- tried to fly with artificial wings
- Also, Joseph of Cupertino (17th century)
 - flew during a procession in 1630
 - perhaps was leaping rather than flying
 - may have suffered from poisoning
 - movie made about him: *The Reluctant Saint* (1962)



Ludovico Mazzanti,
St. Joseph of
Cupertino (18th)

The Medieval Technological Imagination

- by 14th century, medieval populace began to admire spirit of invention
- Jordan of Pisa (1255-1311):
 - *“It is not yet twenty years since they discovered the art of making eyeglasses, which let one see clearly, which is one of the finest and most necessary arts the world has, and it is such a short time since they were discovered: a new art that was never before.”*
- because of the monastic eagerness for technology, the mechanical arts was equated with the virtue of “Temperance”



*Allegory of Temperantia. From De quattuor
virtutibus cardinalibus by Pseudo-Seneca.
Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. Oc.
79, fol. 68 v. Deutsche Fotothek.*

*“He who is mindful of the clock
Is punctual in all his acts...
He who puts glasses to his eyes
See better what’s around him
The mill which sustains our bodies
Never is immoderate.”*

- Positive relationship between temperance and technology (‘mechanical arts’)
- Does technology make us more moral?

- Movie
 - *Vision: From the Life of Hildegard von Bingen* (2009)
- about Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)
 - also known as St. Hildegard
 - Benedictine abbess
 - Christian mystic, visionary
 - polymath
 - playwright, writer of texts on medicine, botany, theology, composer of songs, poet
 - founder of scientific natural history in Germany

- questions
- How did she end up in the monastery?
 - parents (nobles) offered her as an *oblata*
 - also later in the movie, Richardis, a 16-year old, niece of Jutta
- What kind of monastery?
 - Benedictine monastery
 - male monastery but had women
- What kind of education did she have?
 - medicine, precious stones
 - Dioscorides (ancient Greek physician)
 - wrote about plant-based healing medicines
 - *Physiologus*
 - Greek text from c. 2nd CE describing animals, birds, fantastic beasts, etc.
 - from Alexandria, works of Plato, etc.
 - where did these texts come from?
 - what was the perception of Arabic medicine?
- how did she 'secularize' monastic life?
 - we see her offering various plants and curing methods for self-flagellation, sickness
 - e.g., chrysopraxe, tansy, wormseed, milk thistle, yarrow, etc.

- Why were others disbelieving of her visions?
 - challenge to authority
 - gender
- appeal to Bernard of Clairvaux (French abbot responsible for reform of monasteries)
- Challenges to Hildegard
 - case of Sister Clara
 - challenged by Abbot Kuno
 - jealous of Hildegard's authority
- eventually Hildegard, with support of Archbishop Henry (Heinrich) I founded her own monastery in 1150, St. Rupertsberg
- What did they need to build their new monastery
 - construction materials
 - wood, clay, plaster
 - construction tools
 - hammers, pulleys, axes
 - construction plans